

**RHODE ISLAND'S NEW "PEANUT LAW"**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES**

**What is the new "peanut law?"**

The new peanut law, H5671, was passed during the 2007 legislative session. The purpose of the law is to protect students who have allergies to peanuts or tree nuts while they are in school. The goal of the law is to help schools provide a safe environment for all students.

**What is a peanut or tree nut allergy?**

Allergies to peanuts or tree nuts are quite common. Some people have a mild reaction to these products, like developing a rash or hives. However, some people have a very severe reaction to these products that can be life-threatening. A person with this severe type of allergy may stop breathing (anaphylaxis) in less than a minute of smelling, eating or touching peanut or tree nut products.

**What does the law require from schools?**

Schools must work to provide a safe environment for students identified as having a peanut or tree nut allergy. If there are no students in a school with a peanut allergy, the school does not have to do anything related to this law. However, as soon as a student with a peanut allergy enrolls in the school, the school must implement the measures described in the law. If there is a student in the school that has a peanut allergy, the law requires that schools:

- Post a sign at each point of entry to the school and at the cafeteria entrance, alerting people that there is someone in the building with a peanut allergy;
- Prohibit the sale of peanuts/tree nuts in the school cafeteria;
- Designate a peanut/tree nut free table in the cafeteria;
- Designate a peanut/tree nut table in the cafeteria;
- Designate one classroom per grade level where there is a student with a peanut/tree nut allergy as peanut/tree nut free.

**Does the law apply to all schools?**

The law applies to all public and non-public schools serving elementary and middle school students. The law does not apply to high schools.

**Can my child bring peanut products in to the school?**

Yes. The law does not prohibit any student from bringing peanut/tree nut products from home. However, if your child is assigned to the "peanut-free classroom," then the school must arrange for your child to store his/her peanut products outside of the classroom. The student may not store or eat the peanut/tree nut product in the designated peanut-free classroom. The student may eat peanut/tree nut products in the cafeteria.

**Does my child have to sit at a special table?**

The law requires that the school designate a table or tables that is peanut/tree nut free so that those students that need this type of protection can sit there. Other children may also sit at these tables, as long as they do not have peanut/tree nut products as part of their lunch, so as not to isolate any group of students. The law also requires that the school designate peanut/tree nut tables. These tables will help contain peanut smells and residues for those students eating peanut products during lunch, especially if there is a student in the building with the most severe type of allergic reaction. Again, other students may also sit at these tables, even if they are not eating peanut/tree nut products so as not to isolate any group of students.